The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, the smallest of all the seeds
but becomes the biggest so that
the birds of the air shelter in its branches.

The Mustard Seed

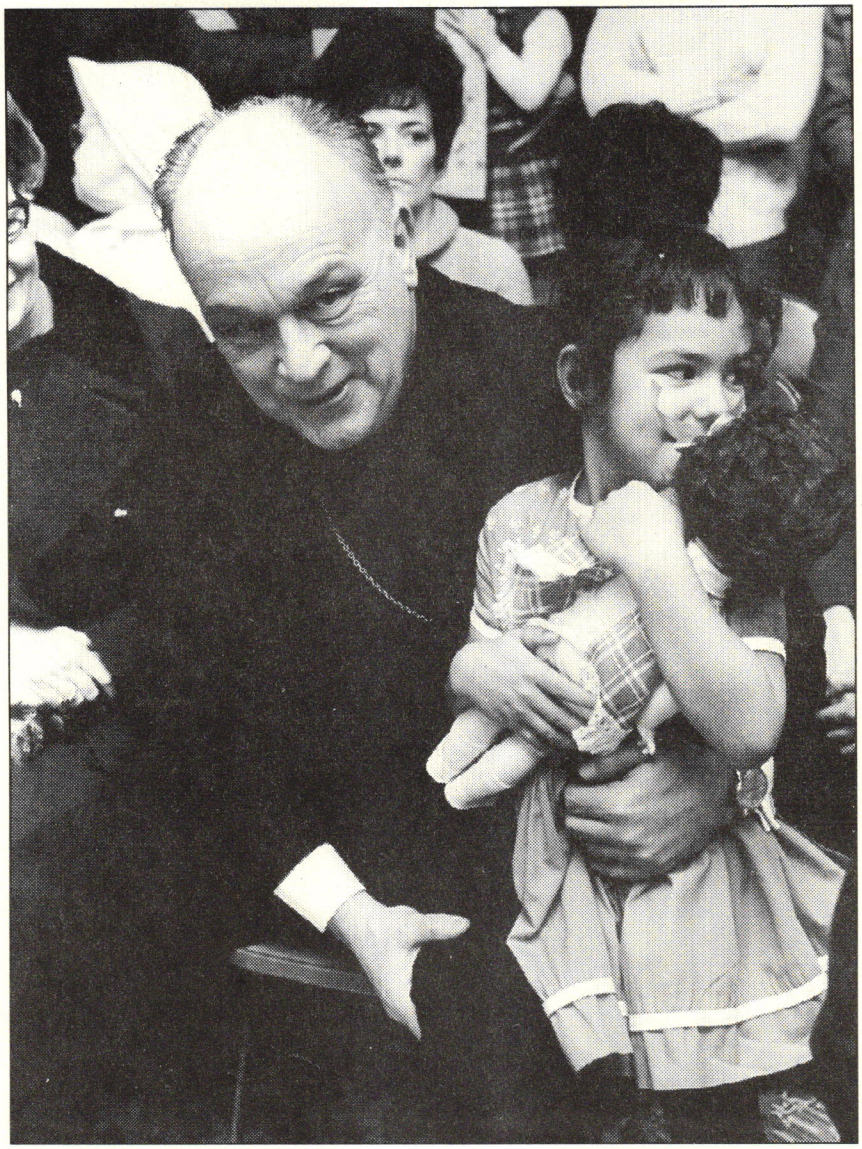
25th Anniversary

Book compiled by M. Peter Lavallee • Narrative written by Michael Boover

Twenty Fifth Anniversary

The Mustard Seed

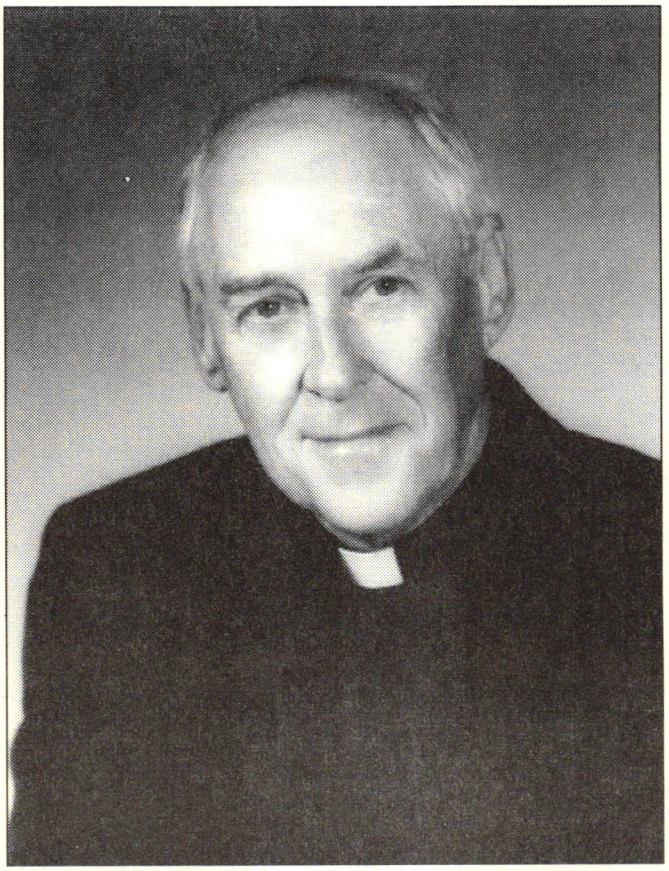
Donna Domiziano, the director of The Mustard Seed and Joe Devoe, a Mustard Seed family member, work in the kitchen.



Dedication

This booklet is written on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the founding of The Mustard Seed. It is in a spirit of celebration and thankfulness for these 25 years that this book has been compiled. It details the history of The Mustard Seed and those important individuals whose dedication, creative vision and faith have contributed to what we are today. One of them, to whom this book is dedicated, is Bishop Harrington.

In addition to history, the book contains a chronological chart of the groups and organizations which have served at The Mustard Seed and made the goal of feeding the hungry a solid reality. Finally, the book contains summaries of the various programs available at The Mustard Seed for those in need, photographs of Mustard Seed "family" and workers and pages of dedication.



Prologue

By Father Bernard Gilgun, Chaplain of The Mustard Seed

Peter Maurin was fifty-six when he met Dorothy Day. He died in 1949. It will be sixty-four years May 1, 1997 since "The Catholic Worker," their newspaper, was first hawked for a penny a copy in the parks and sidewalks of New York. "A program to build a new society within the shell of the old" was the goal. It was the Gospel come to life. More than dreams, they shared a vision of a social order established by Christ.

Their vision was in the tradition of the saints of every age. Like Saint Benedict they honored work, study and prayer. Following St. Francis they learned to prize voluntary poverty and making peace. They practiced the spiritual and corporal works of mercy and they put their total trust in God. They were holy. Dorothy Day says "I think if you have a very firm spiritual life, ways constantly open up to you. You encounter people, or you come across books. Somebody recommends this or somebody has that idea. But, that process comes from a very steady spiritual life." They focused on this vision in long hours of prayer, and they truly believed that Christ became their very life at Mass. The Eucharist was at the heart of it all. Like the disciples on the way to Emmaus, they would say "We came to know Him in the breaking of the bread." The Catholic Worker and The Mustard Seed are works of faith.

For almost twenty-five years I have been celebrating the Eucharist at The Mustard Seed. I have witnessed great faith. In crisis after crisis, I have seen the seed that was thought dead produce a harvest. No budget, no steady income and no paid help have convinced me that this is more than a work of faith. It is clearly the work of God.

One of the early Church Fathers says "Those who see the work of God see God working." I am humbly grateful to have seen with my own eyes the wonder of His love. I have come to share their vision. Without money, without cost, the Loaves and Fishes are multiplied at The Mustard Seed and we recognize Him in the breaking of bread.

Mission Statement & Summary of Services Available

The Mustard Seed is a Catholic Worker hospitality house. We are a private community who serves the poor in obedience to Christ's invitation (Matthew 10:42) "And remember this! Whoever gives even a drink of cold water to one of the least of my followers, because he is my follower, will certainly receive his reward." Our activities depend entirely on the charity of the faithful to meet our expenses and needs. Members of our community practice voluntary poverty, receiving neither wage nor salary for their work. We have never sought tax-exempt status since we are convinced that justice and the works of mercy should be acts of conscience which come at a personal sacrifice without government approval, regulation or reward.

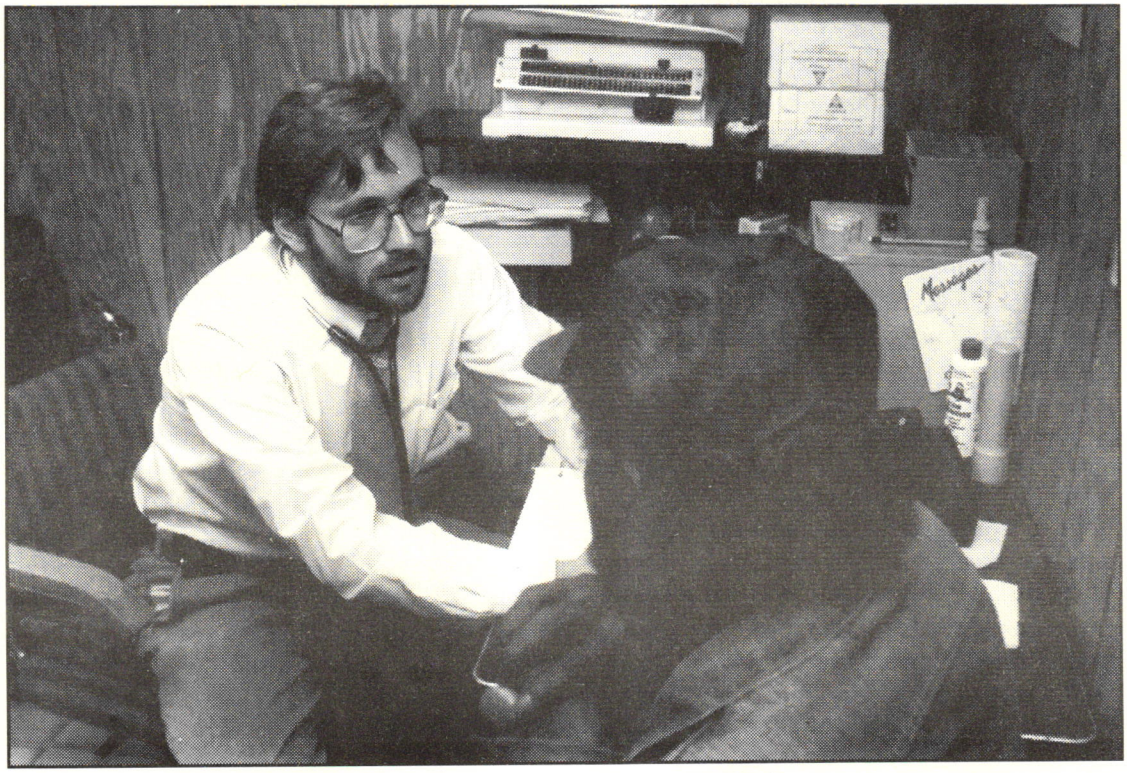
Programs offered at The Mustard Seed reflect our goals and purpose.

- First Friday Round Table Discussion for clarification of thought.
- Meals are offered daily, including on holidays such as Christmas and Easter. No questions are asked when people come to us. They are simply fed. Feeding times are as follows: one meal is served daily.

  Monday – Saturday, 6 p.m. meal
  Sunday – 12 noon

- An emergency food pantry is available on the premises for anyone in need of food assistance. Groceries given are non-perishables.
- A medical clinic staffed by H.O.A.P. (Homeless Outreach Advocacy Program) members is open on Thursday afternoon for anyone in need of medical treatment and cannot afford it. H.O.A.P. Staff are a team of doctors, nurses and case managers who also can assist with housing needs and benefits.
- Alcoholics Anonymous meetings Saturday evening 7 - 8 p.m.
- A chapel is located at The Mustard Seed where Mass is said on Friday evenings at 7:30 p.m. The rosary is said daily in the chapel at 4 p.m.
- A recreation room for neighborhood children is available after school. High school and college volunteers supervise.

It is our belief that by responding to God's grace by doing these works of mercy, we can together advance the Kingdom in our midst.

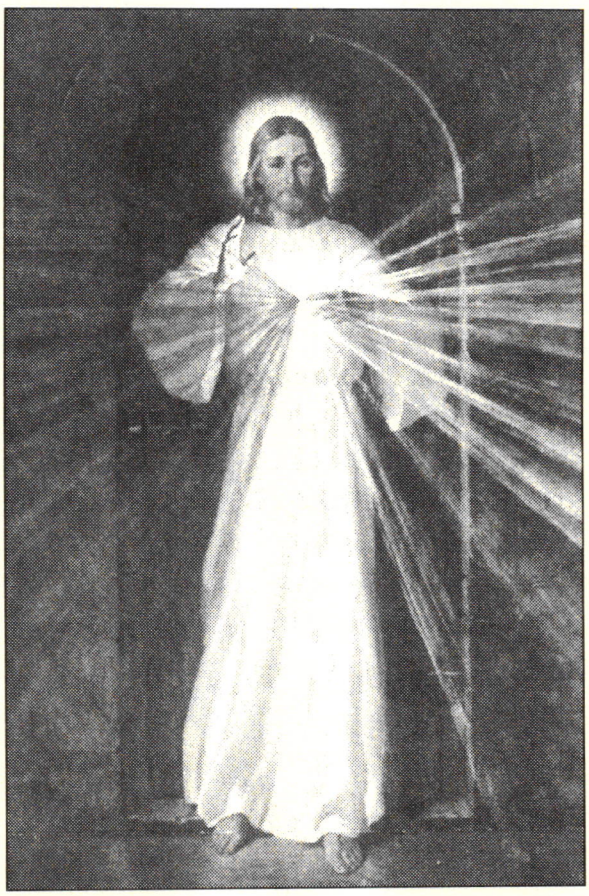


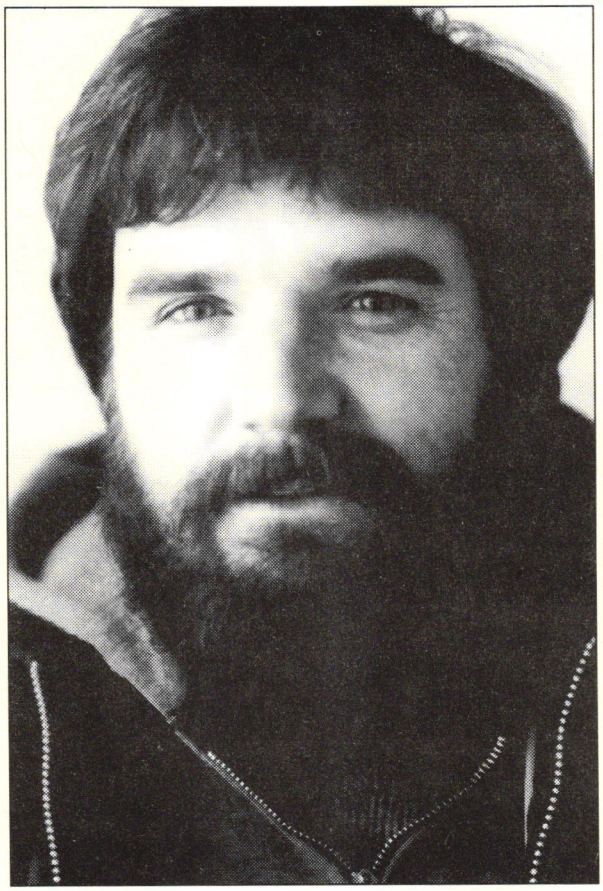
A H.O.A.P Doctor works in the clinic.

In Memory

We entrust to God and His loving kindness all those who have been a part of the Mustard Seed including all groups, workers and guests.

Matthew 25:31-40 "When the Son of Man comes as King, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his royal throne, and all the earth's people will be gathered before him. Then he will divide them into two groups , just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats: he will put the sheep at his right and the goats at his left...The righteous will then answer him, 'When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you a drink?'...The King will answer back ' I tell you, indeed, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me!'"





Michael Boover

When the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of The Mustard Seed arrived, The Mustard Seed community asked one of their own, Mr. Michael Boover, to compile a narrative which highlights some of the most important persons, events and experiences they, as a whole, agreed comprise the first twenty-five years of the Seed's history. Therefore, it is in his words that this portion of this booklet is written. The fullest, most accurate, experience of a community can only be felt by one of the community's members. As such, it is often one of those members who is able to communicate that experience to others in the fullest, most effective way.

Pictured on next page, Mustard Seed Workers on an outing with Fr. Bernie at St. Anne's Shrine on the Feast of St. Ann.

The Mustard Seed 25 Years

By Michael Boover

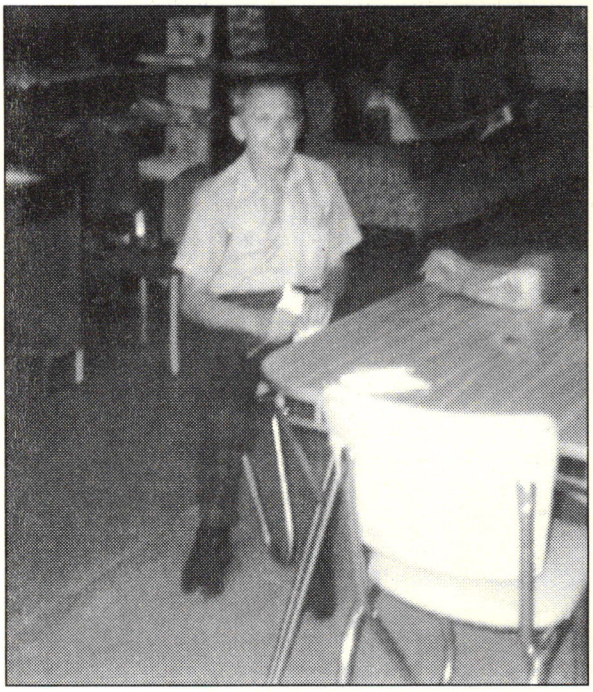
This is certainly more gift than feat, unless one understands it as a feat of God, which it really is. Dorothy Day once said that the Catholic Worker existed to show the providence of God. In that sense, the Seed has truly fulfilled its purpose. For twenty five years now His poor have fed from His most gracious Hand there.

Yet, our God is an incarnational God, a flesh-assuming God, whose work is ongoing in and through His people.

In that sense, the history of the Seed is an account also of a response of many, many people to a mysterious call of God to many realities: prayer, service, community, poverty, suffering love, compassion, sharing, receiving, hoping, hurting, renewal, giving, caring, prophecy, silence, visions and dreams, work, retreat; to the Church in Her myriad dimensions: liturgy, intellectual life, farming, sacraments, protest and prison, the Divine Office, writing, crying, healing and the works of mercy.

These calls are deep and mysterious but also ordinary, normative vocational bearings for those associated with Jesus, whether neophyte disciple or those who have become icons to us of religious life, Christian marriage or devotion after decades of connectedness and great intimacy with God. Such mystery makes writing a history of sorts all the more difficult.

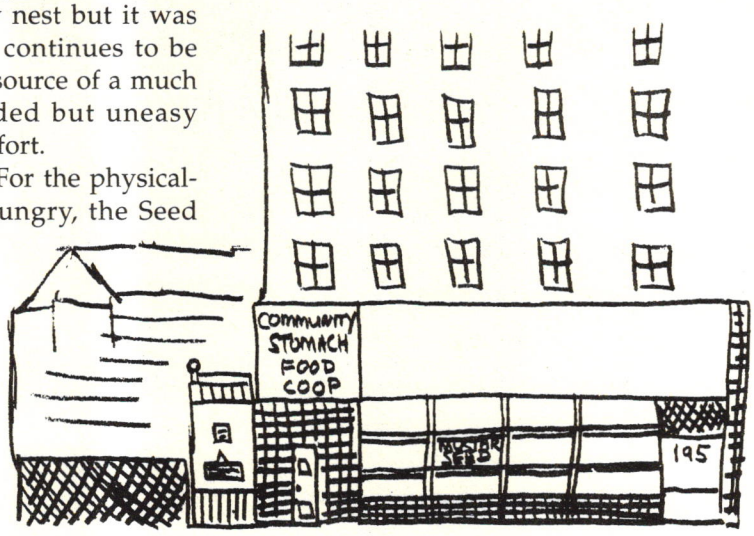
Then there is the question of need. Dorothy talks about the movement as a community of need. The Seed is a classic in this regard. Although there were some who came pretty whole and they know who they are, there were many of us who came to help driven by our own desperate need for love, recognition, belonging and other hungers. Those that came for help often did more and far better than those mentioned in this account. They too know who they are and their reward is in Heaven.



"Polish Mike"

The Seed was and is a place of vast and little transactions, Divine, human, animal and mineral! It is, like the parable, a tree that grew from a little seed where the birds now find some rest from flight. For those who came with emotional hungers, it was no cozy nest but it was and continues to be the source of a much needed but uneasy comfort.

For the physically hungry, the Seed



The Storefront

means something in the belly where Ghandi's understanding of God's returning as bread applies. The miracle of the loaves and fishes is aptly alluded to in Catholic Worker and Seed literature. The plate before the hungry bespeaks the entire course of the salvific mystery. God feeds His people.

"Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too even with a crust where there is companionship" states Dorothy Day. She touches upon a reality witnessed to at the Seed that "we cannot love God unless we love each other and to love one another we must know one another. We know God in the breaking of the bread and we know each other in the breaking of the bread and we are not alone any more."

For some of us, this not being alone anymore is the saving grace of the Catholic Worker. The world, by God, needn't be so cold.

People walk together to come to supper or if they walk alone they find a table of companions to join upon arrival. Some chose to simply sit alone with the Alone. One man came years ago just to sit in the chapel before the Blessed Sacrament. He came for that other, parallel feast which made and makes the other possible.

Frank Kartheiser

Frank Kartheiser once said that all we really had to share was God's Love. True enough. There were moments when we caught a glimpse of the deeper realities such as our shared conditions, our underlying unity as humankind, the great hungry before God. Much too often, however, our history was and is marred by our blindness, our ego and control needs and the very hungers which bring us all to the shared table. It was, however, The Mustard Seed, singled out for its radical incorporation of the needy into its common life, for the blurring of distinctions, for its anarchic, freewheeling personalism, that made some people take note. It made others either very unhappy or very happy.

Alternatively, the years have meant a kind of settling of sorts which has meant many more welcome, brighter and cleaner days. The kind of reckless love we once knew is an important part of our history. There was, despite much pain, much good fruit born of this love. Yet, most of the early crew

The Mustard Seed House

stand humbled by the sheer harshness of many of the realities encountered in the first decade and would be hard pressed to repeat anything quite like it. It was very much the grace of youth and its pouring out!

As Geraldine Dinardo experientially observed "The first ten years were hard!" Better words are not found to succinctly but adequately describe that decade. It must be said that the founders of the storefront and house each had their own visions and identified with various threads from the others' part of the quilt. There were disagreements about the way things went right from the beginning and it looks like disagreements will always exist. It is the nature of visionaries to want to exert some influence. We all lose and gain some in shared ventures such as the Seed and the Catholic Worker. Wherever two or three are gathered, even in His Name, there is trouble!

W e are poor and have hurt each other badly at times. Yet, there is a love for each other that transcends all that. Still, we would be dishonest not to acknowledge past and present suffering over some things as well as the wonder of it all.

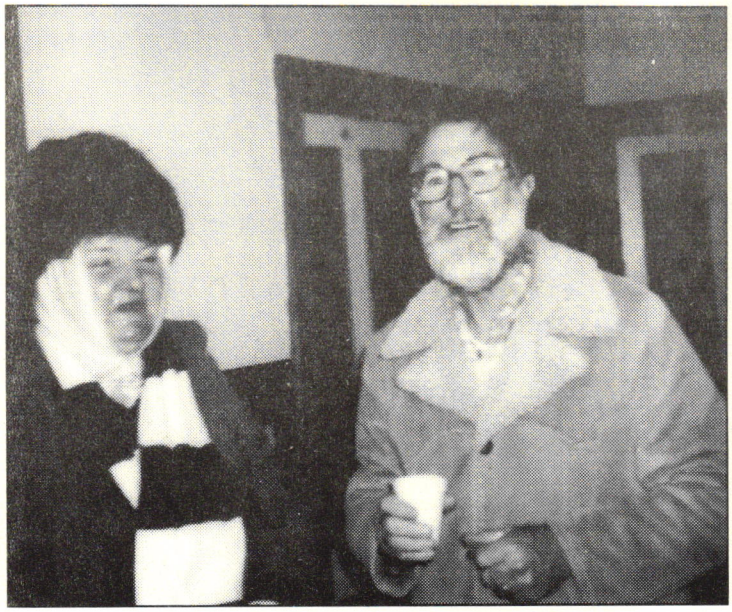
How did it all begin? Well...

The long, golden, ponytailed Frank Kartheiser teamed up with the boyish, freckle-faced Shawn Donovan between 1971 and 1972. The two came together for Jesuit-inspired (Joe Labran, SJ) envisioning, prayer and sympathy. The heart for this was received from the bosom of Holy Cross College and a radical, anti-war politic sometimes a la Berrigan, sometimes a la "Pacem in Terris," not to mention a penchant for their own chess game a la Spaasky/Fisher, and the rest is history! A seed was planted and grew.

Legend has it that the official start was at the home of David and Joanne O'Brien, then in Auburn, with a meeting and a Mass. Father Frank Scollen celebrated the Gospel reading for that day, being that of the mustard seed parable.

Shortly thereafter, the name "Mustard Seed" was painted on the glass door of the storefront at 195 Pleasant Street. A "community living room" opened in the fall of 1972 in earnest, although the stove never got hooked up. Bob Lafond made a table which would later go on to be a makeshift bed and then the altar at the first Mustard Seed house.

The neighborhood folk made good use of that storefront for about a year until a trash can fire along a wall occasioned a forced departure. The landlord had already extended patience upon patience upon the highly anarchic, fledgling com-



Mrs. Fish and Joe Goulet

Geraldine Dinardo at the Catholic Peace Fellowship Conference, Amherst.

munity committed to sharing pretty much whatever came our way. Soup was heated on the radiator and clothes were hung on racks for the giving. There was a comfortable couch, magazines, conversation and a revolution for the making. Shawn Donovan married Margie Bragg, his long love, and moved to New Hampshire and the Bragg family homestead.

Geraldine DiNardo - Snowstorm of 1978

For awhile, several of us, including Daria Meshnuk, Debbie Bombard, Geri Dinardo, Frank Karthesiser, and I were meeting about community. A Quaker inspired social action community, the Life Center, began with half of the group and the other half looked around for a house-of-hospitality-to-be.

In the fall of 1974, a house was purchased by Geraldine Dinardo, Frank Kartheiser and myself. Reverend Carl Kline, the area campus minister, came along to the realtor with us, bestowing on us a kind of Protestant sacrament of moral support. Because Frank was already in trouble with the I.R.S. for war tax refusal and they were after him, Frank declined to sign on as an owner, fearing he might jeopardize the experiment. The I.R.S. did seize what they could from him.

I was a starry-eyed Worcester State College kid who had just been smitten by the Catholic Worker vision after reading Dorothy Day's "Loaves and Fishes."

I decided to sign for the house when no one else piped up when the realtor asked who would go forth with the offer. Geri, taken by this child's affirmation, dove (as an adult) right into the lake after me! And the rest is history!

The Mustard Seed House of Hospitality took root at 93 Piedmont Street. A previous owner was known as the bearer of soup to sick neighbors. A NIMBY meeting had taken place, we later learned, but an abutter and widow, Aggie Augasian, who had with her husband, run a restaurant close to the site of the old Worcester Catholic Worker in the late 1930's on Austin Street, spoke up in our favor and the project was able to go forward. Thank you, Aggie!

The first Mass was celebrated on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 1974 with Reverends John Burke, pastor of St. Paul's; Frank Scollen, Worcester's "hippie

priest" and, Fr. Bernard E. Gilgun, from the "House of Ammon" Catholic Worker Farm in Hubbardston. Thereafter, the Feast of the Annunciation was always celebrated as the birth date of the house.

The house was blessed and the work got off to a generous start with inundation by summer. The house closed for reevaluation subsequently. It was soon overwhelmed and again reevaluated. This search for some kind of stability in the house went on and on in many guises and for many years. At some point, the house just went on despite everything! We grew tired and faint of heart.

'Having set out with St. Paul, we found ourselves crucified to the world and the world to us.'

Fr. Bernie and friends singing.

Having set out with St. Paul, we found ourselves crucified to the world and the world to us. But, more and more, by sheer grace, parishes and groups were interested in helping by cooking and serving a meal once a month or getting together a painting party, or putting together a cleaning contingent. Individuals came to do extraordinary tasks which were essential. Marie Goulet gave us her surplus food when there was nothing. Joe Goulet put steel lolley columns in the cellar without which supper would have been eaten in the cellar before long.

Covenant Methodist Church said they would teach us Catholics who were good at "works" about "faith" by selling little Mustard Seed keychains and necklaces. This began at the storefront. We harassed shopkeepers at malls until a down payment was provided for the house. We "picked up" the mortgage that had been so generously held by Ann Wickwire. It was her father, Mr. Seman, who handed down the house to her and we believe it was his wife about whom saintliness was attributed in her neighborly attending to the area sick.

One street fellow told me a prostitute had died in the house tragically but this was never substantiated. Its possibility is not doubted. The house knew great glory and great suffering.

Jeanette Noel

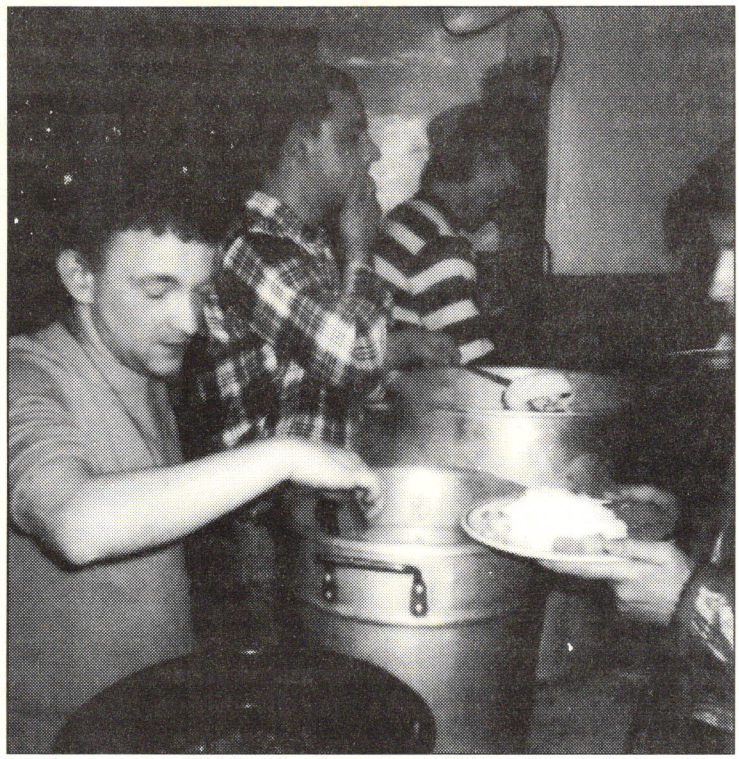
The house was a very nice house when we got it. Soon it took on the ambience of a Catholic Worker house, full! Tony Taylor, a Worcester artist, made a great contribution to the beginning effort when he lettered the dining room walls with the Scripture "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible to you." Testing shadowed our faith often and we pondered those words.

While Joanne Demers, Richard Alix and myself were pilgrims in France on our way to the Council of Youth at Taize, we promised Geri Dinardo back home we would pray for her. We lit candles in cathedrals and churches throughout France in the summer of 1974, notably in front of statues of St. Therese of Lisieux, Geri's patron. Little did we know that Geri had closed the house because it had been engulfed in a sea of chaos. When we returned, Geri left for the West coast for some relief. The returning young reopened the doors that had been closed to all but Earl Cromp, the one old man Geri knew belonged, and soon we were swamped again.

Earl Cromp lived at the house to his dying day in the summer of 1980. He spoke of his past, of coming face to face

with a German soldier when he jumped into a trench, bayonet poised, only to discover him sitting up stiff, clutching the photographs of his family in the other hand. He told his stories over and over. We never tired of them. He gave us an unusual comfort and the Seed was a totally unexpected gift for his doting. Earl was for The Mustard Seed and The Mustard Seed was for Earl. Joe Devoe, who is said to be his reincarnation, graces the Seed to date with his long presence and gift. The Seed is for Joe and Joe is for the Seed. What would the Seed be without him?

So many people had a part like Earl and Joe. Like Mama B., the "Mary Poppins" of Worcester who cheered us immensely. A barren woman, she called herself but yet was the mother of so many children. "Cup of tea?"she often said, the perfect expression of genuine solicitousness. Mrs. Fish graces the house still, having come in the mid-seventies. She was the color, the rainbow, stitched together from the fragments of rain and sun, someone new and redeemed. Serving at the "Pickle Barrel", the house of hospitality and community living room at the other end of Piedmont Street, she was the bearer of the cup. The coffee cup and the cup of salvation. She once told a bishop that she was the priest at the Seed



Serving supper.

The old and the young found refuge. An elderly woman, Madeline, was one of the first guests. One day, our statue of St. Therese turned up in the front window of the West Side Pharmacy. Madeline had carried her over for a bit more exposure. One evening, Geri found her toothbrush dripping wet yet aware that she had not used it. Fearing that these new heights of communitarianism were not for her, she determined to locate the culprit. She asked Madeline if she had used her toothbrush and Madeline sheepishly responded with "Just for a little while." A young mother who needed to get away to evaluate things and took to the road for awhile came to the Seed. She entrusted her toddler son to us. Crowded as we were at the time, the elderly Madeline and the young child shared the same bed on the third floor. Our hearts were educated by these rare means, by experiences such as these.

'An elderly woman, Madeline, was one of the first guests. One day, our statue of St. Therese turned up in the front window of the West Side Pharmacy. Madeline had carried her over for a bit more exposure.'

There was continental hospitality. A young Mexican man, on his way to work at the Olympics in Montreal, stayed for awhile en route. Another man had come between visits from the Catholic Worker farm in Ripon, Quebec.

There was also intercontinental hospitality. There were more than a few individuals and couples who visited from France, some connected to Taize, that ecumenical monastery in the Burgundian hills which drew and continues to draw many young people to the Gospel life. The multitudes of our own city came to dine nightly and cross country folk would show up, some every spring like the birds of Capistrano. Others would come in winter like the old fellow from Maine who wintered in his orange van the best he could, sheltering on really cold nights and "librarying" on really cold days. He was a welcome guest among the evening diners and like Earl, brought a kind of comfort.

Early on, Joanne Demers, a nurse, joined in our healing labors. She brought special gifts of caring for the physically ailing and set up a kind of primitive hospital which contained shelves of gauze, antiseptics and wash basins which were

Dorothy Day

Frank, Fr. Eddie and Charlie at the hermitage garden.

'Alongside our rural connection with the farm, a relationship developed with the Trappists in Spencer.'

put to immediate use. She had the grace of loving the roughest and toughest among us.

Joyce Perron, a neighborhood girl who frequented the storefront after her day of classes at Doherty High School, joined us early upon graduation, moving into the house from her family home a block away. She had a particular gift in outreaching to priests throughout the Diocese, arranging the schedule of liturgy for visiting priests, many of whom became stalwart supporters of the work and kept us in their all-important prayer. Joyce, like myself, loved to go to the farm in Hubbardston. On Sunday afternoons, a caravan of Seeders would routinely venture out to the commune for Mass and the wonderful common meal that followed that was prepared by the Jette family. There, we grew close to Father Bernie and others who shared the Catholic Worker vision. We also enjoyed the music that so marked that time In the summer, the Seed crew would take a dip in Comet Pond before heading back to the city. Several of us would make little retreats to the farm from time to time and help a bit with the agricultural pursuits. Joyce would sometimes send notes to the city sounding a little like Louisa May Alcott, Emily Dickenson and Dorothy Day combined.

Some of our more troubled people landed at the farm. Known for never turning anybody away, we came to rely on the farm's generosity as did Dorothy who sent some of the Tivoli folk there too. She sent workers too. One worker especially made a deep impression on both the Seed and farm communities.

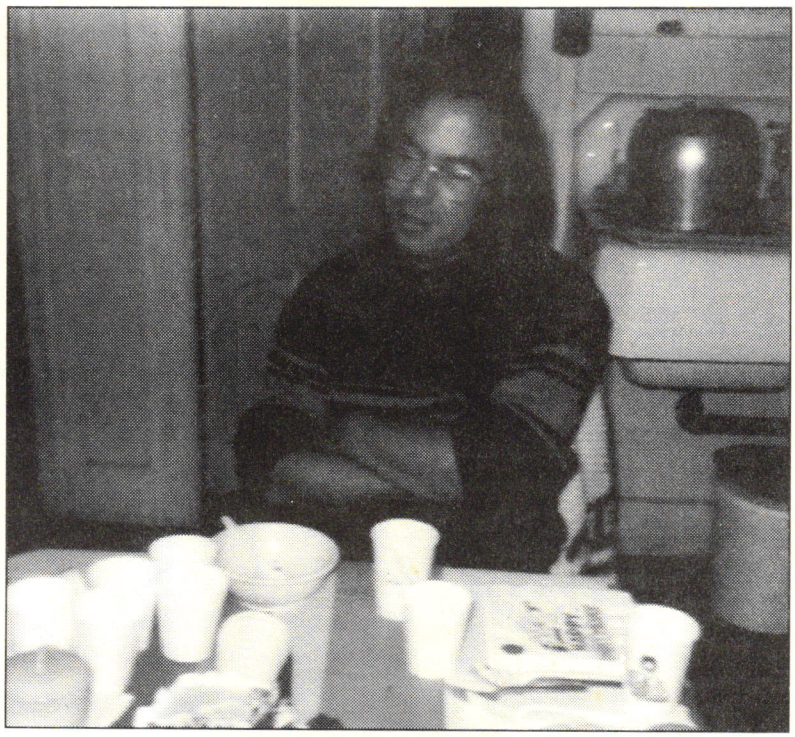
Cliff Lichter, an itinerant Catholic Worker pilgrim and farmer was the closest example of Franciscan spirituality we had encountered. He put Worcester and Hubbardston on his circuitous national route of serving soup, cutting wood, planting and praying in hospitality houses and Dakota Abbey where he was needed. Through Cliff, we came to a new appreciation of voluntary poverty and piety.

Alongside our rural connection with the farm, a relationship developed with the Trappists in Spencer. Dorothy Day had spoken to the monks and called them to share their lands with the poor. There also was a more personal connection. A hermit priest stopped by the storefront one day with a load of zucchini. His niece had been involved in anti-war work with Shawn and alerted him to the Catholic Worker sprout that had been sown in the inner city. Eventually, we cultivated together a full acre in mixed vegetables and another in corn outside his hermitage. For years we hauled these agricultural treasures to town as gifts to the poor. Thank God and Brother Eddie.

Soon, the monks invited a number of us to Abbey retreats as the Centering Prayer Movement was getting off the ground. Inspired by Pope Paul the Sixth's summons to the contemplative orders to share their treasures with the Church

in the world, the monks were moved to take us under their wings in hopes of quickening a "second Pentecost" as called for by the Pontiff. Our inclinations were personally and socially restless and sitting was not easy for us. Our contributions were perhaps most modest, yet the love shown us by these monks was one of the signal blessings of our life together. Edward, Owen, Thomas, Mark, Theophane, Ben, Jude, Kizito, Aelred, Ephraim and so many others. How many dear friends we had among them.

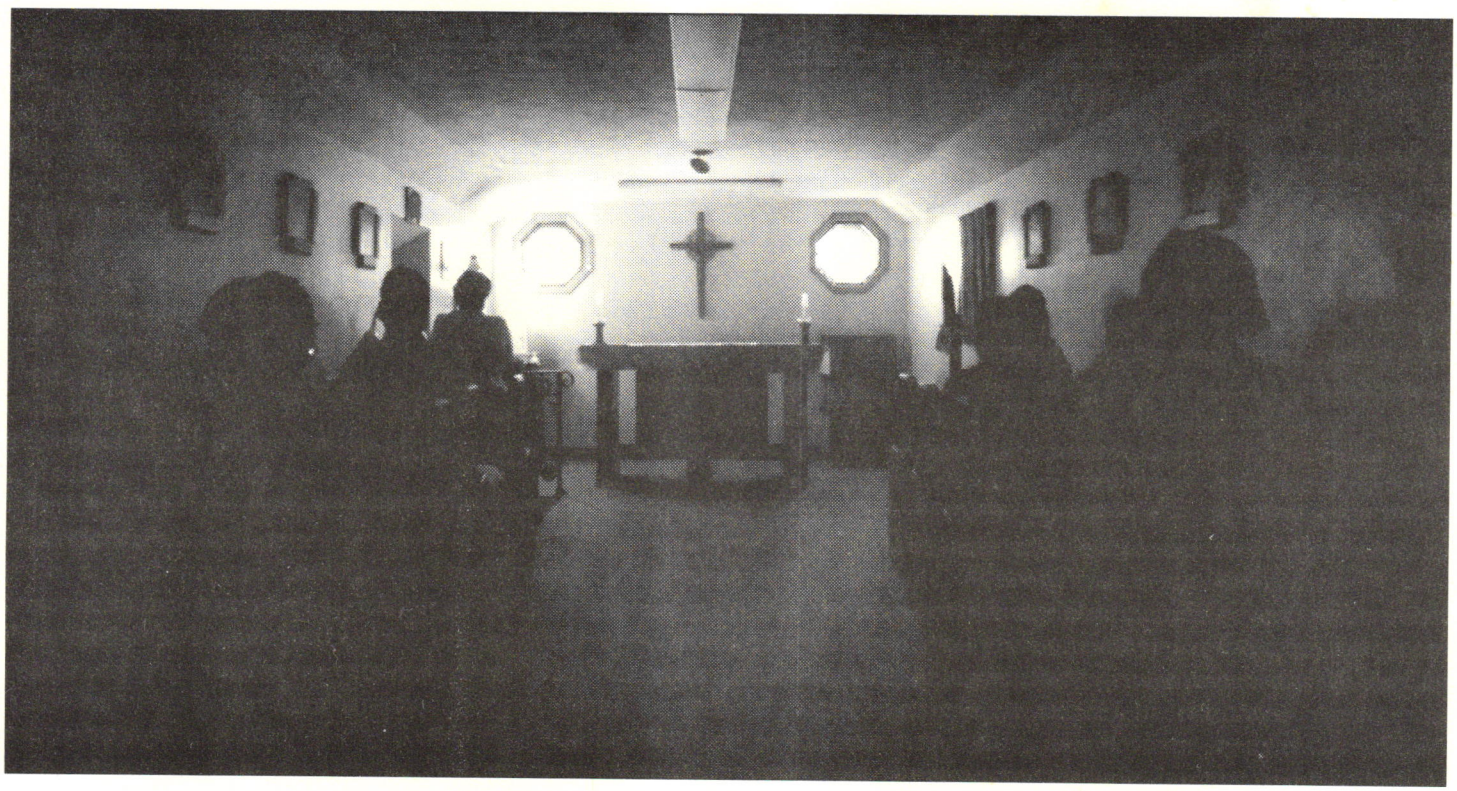
Then there is "Koz", Richard Kozlowski, the farmer, carpenter, plumber and stonemason from the Hubbardston experiment. He has gardens in both Worcester and Brookfield. And, there's us, the Boovers, who fancy ourselves urban farmers on the edge of this city. Suffice it to say that to present, Peter's "Green Revolution" has found some fertile ground among Worcesterites. Our sister community in Worcester, Sts. Francis and St. Therese Catholic Worker, has raised beds in their back yard and is involved in a community garden on Hawley Street.



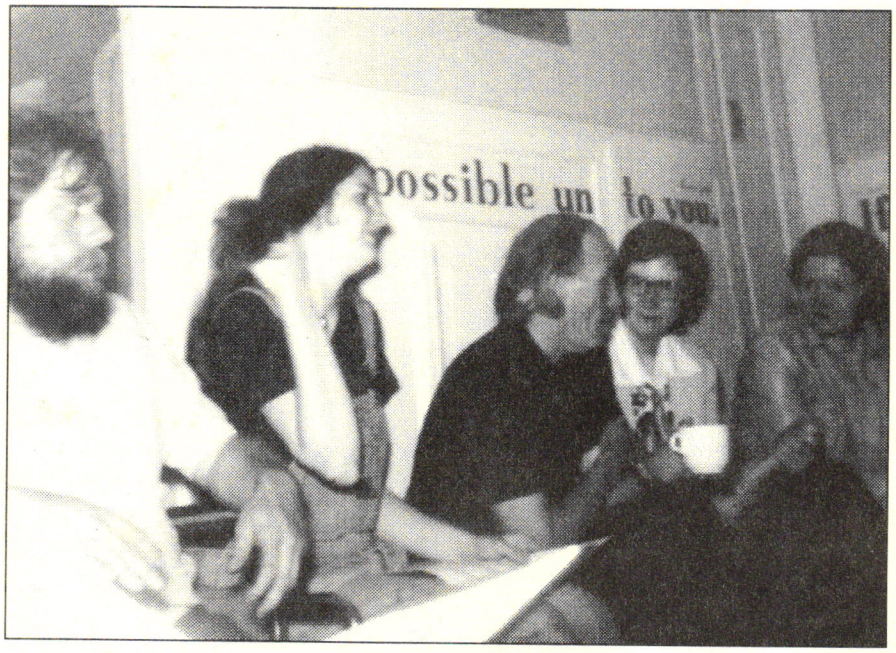
Richard "Sherman" Alex

For the Mustard Seed folks, the Hubbardston and Spencer connections were means of envisioning an agricultural aspect to urban life. Long revered too are the folks in Upton who carry on in the tradition of "cult, culture and cultivation" through the liturgical arts (especially stained glass), the Eric Gill School for the study of good living and their own exemplary gardens and homes. Their role as predecessors is highly regarded. The Paulsons and Roches are a light to us. This rural history parallels the urban venture and supports and compliments it. Though more hidden and less pronounced than the city ventures, these experiments in radical Christian living are very important to the movement in the city and to the Catholic Worker and Church as a whole.

The city folk have had the vocation or the burden of being somewhat loudmouthed. Little publications spun a partic-



The Chapel



Tom Neiburg, Joyce Perron, Fr. Bernie and two visiting Sisters of St. Joseph.

ular brand of engaged faith. Two that spoke in Worcester in the seventies were the CALC news, the work of a modest collective called Central Massachusetts Clergy and Laity Concerned. In it, we agitated for peace, justice, human rights, environmental responsibility and community from an ecumenical religious base. Monthly, Frank Kartheiser joined John Stevens and the other "true blue" voluntarists to staple, fold address and prepare for mailing this invitation to concern on the dining room tables of the Seed into the wee hours of the night. The same was true of the less regular Seed newsletter "Sowing" which lamentably went out to more people outside Worcester than in or so it seemed. When you are a community of this kind, you search out your kin and sometimes they are in Canada or France more truly than next door.

Over the years, invitations to speak to parish and other groups multiplied, so much so that we often forgot where we were supposed to go. Worcester County was very good to us in this regard. Modern day "Johnny Appleseeds", we were graced to do some "Sowing." Sometimes it was great while at other times it was horrible. Sometimes after painting a pretty picture one came home to a confused and complex reality.

Dorothy Day had once said that often our houses resembled houses of hostility more than hospitality and she was not off the mark. The day to day life in a hospitality house can be hard. Jack Cook, a New York Catholic Worker and author came to speak at a class of Mike True's at Assumption College. I remember him saying something that struck me as very true and borne of experience. He said that "The only way that houses of hospitality work is if the people in them serve one another." There were many occasions when this ideal was lost to our personal agendas. But, there were those glorious days when we knew with an almost absolute knowledge that we were doing the right thing and that the ideal was living.

'...there were those glorious days when we knew with an almost absolute knowledge that we were doing the right thing and that the ideal was living.'

There is a romance that accompanies the foundation of a house and we enjoyed a bit of it such as John playing the flute at Compline in the freshly painted chapel by Leo Distefeno, Tony Taylor and Joe Reney, tea and compline with a band of monks, songs in Vietnamese at a clarification of thought meeting with Mobi Warren and a visit that night by James Forest and his family and Scudder Parker coming all the way from Vermont to show us a slideshow about the B-1 bomber. Other events included Yvette Naal speaking about the community of the Ark in the Borie Noble, Don Bullens with his musical slideshow on the elderly, liturgical visits from the Floating Parish, United Farmworkers Union organizers, college students eager to help in any way and monthly vigils at City Hall calling for hunger relief and amnesty for draft resisters.

But there were tears when the first blood stains fell on the couch where our dear guest who was a hemophiliac bruised, anxiety when windows started going out and workers were roughed up and horror when roaches decided to take up residence en masse. There were loves that failed, dreams that frightened and deep dissapointment. Yet, friends would show up at the neediest times to at least salvage some of the vision.

A significant figure came along in the mid-seventies who was my own Sancho Panza. The windmills were winning when my old seminary buddy came along for the crazy ride. I shall always remember our adventures which he called, perhaps more appropriately, more of "your stunts." My pal Sherm, a nickname given earlier because of his likeness to the cartoon character Sherman, moved in for a couple of years. He cheered up his cheerless pal with long trips in his auto named "The Wayback Machine." It was yellow, run down and with a leather roof peeling off fast. There was no danger of the "wayback" going the way of stealth as had the first nice health inspector's motorcycle. Even in that case, a return was negotiated out of neighborhood deference to the Seed.

One memorable day, Sherm came home, umbrella in hand and pant leg torn from back pocket down to his ankle due to his wallet theft. Our hero had rightfully had enough. For his humble way, he shall always remain a favorite of his friends. By the time he departed, the windmills were a bit kinder. Just recently, he married the woman he met through the Seed tribe during those years. All blessing is fitting.

Someone who had been in the background of the Seed began to take center stage. Lillian "Lucky" Clarke had a vision in a detox in Rhode Island. As a result, she requested to be baptized and to join particularly Geraldine and I, her Godparents, in the work at the Seed. Her story has often been told which consists of a raucous journey of faith, an ongoing struggle with addiction, an exercise of great gifts and holy transition through the stages of HIV and AIDS to Eternal Life. She is a significant figure not only for her contributions in caring for the very poor as someone who knew all the vagaries of street life, but as a model of someone who broke the giver-receiver barriers in a daring experiment of stretching traditional understandings for the movement as a whole. Her friends remain part of the extended family and devoted to the vision such as David Bakerlis, Mike Bottis and Tommy Wright.

A great soul who was also among those baptized into the community was James "Charlie Schlitz" Salters, a small and kindly black man who loved us all so much. He worked so hard in the house and was often "on the mission" with neighborhood father, Rudy Guay, in his own version of the "wayback," to the Trappistine Abbey in Wrentham to procure dented canned goods and bread for distribution. He cared for the animals around the house particularly "Chippy" and was a man of vision and dreams.

John Stevens, a ruddy-complexioned and devoted man lived and worked alongside Charles. His specialty was grooming the shrubbery for much of the neighborhood. He kept a diary which detailed the activities of his day in Piedmont which is the most detailed chronicle of those intense years. He ended his entries with a prayer to the Trinity.

Tom Neiburg joined us early, washing piles of dishes from his wheelchair as a mighty contribution to the first Mustard Seed suppers. Once, we put up a sign on his bedroom door, "The Jewish Worker," and he was mighty pleased. He got somewhat discouraged by all the losses he saw around us. Logically, he would be correct in calling the experiment

The first Mustard Seed house

a failure, but Tom knew experientially of Christ. He lived a passion for most of his life and I reckon him one of the mightiest friends above despite all the troubles we put each other through and had seen. He once laughed at our weakness. There was no way we weren't going to lose. It appeared to me that he instinctively knew, however, that there was more to the story and there might be a laugh for more of us...later on.

Neil and Mary fell in love at love at The Seed. They had two beautiful daughters. Neil was a wild and crazy guy, with a heart as wide as the sky and Mary a somewhat shy, Irish schoolgirl. Neil and I hitchhiked all over when we were both depressed in 1978. We loved each other yet could also grow tired of each other. He died of Hodgkin's Disease one night, just complaining of flu-like symptoms. Doctors had never seen anything like it.

Neil's other pal, Tom Wright, was a 17 year old when he first came to The Seed. He made it his home close to the start. He asked Neil and Mary to be his godparents and was baptized at St. Anne's by Father Bernie as was James Salters at City Hospital before his death. Charlie died on the feast of St. Charles Luwanga and the African Martyrs. It seemed Heaven was smiling on James and his prayerful friends. He lies aside Earl at Notre Dame Cemetery as he did on the second floor dormitory.

Margie Farren came to the Seed in the late seventies from a Catholic Worker background. Her family was one of the founding families of the Rochester Catholic Worker. A nurse and searcher, she was a dear companion and fellow traveler along the starry trail of healing. She gifted the house with a new gentleness and understanding of the tradition. She knew sorrow like the back of her hand, wisened in that discipline as to be vibrantly tender.

Mrs. Fish

Ray Demers, my big seminary brother, was reawakened in a Hindu ceremony to his Catholic heritage. He came with rekindled vocational inclinations. He brought spiritual reading into the house and took time to watch David Carradine in "Kung Fu" in the afternoons. He was an inspiration. He got us all working on a roofing crew for awhile, feeling like family members of Noah and the Beriau brothers. We ate our lunch huddled in circles and the regular workers wondered what kind of people we were! Ray left to be a Trappist for several years and then married Celia who had become a good friend of The Seed. He advocates now for the rights of the elderly and cares for his family.

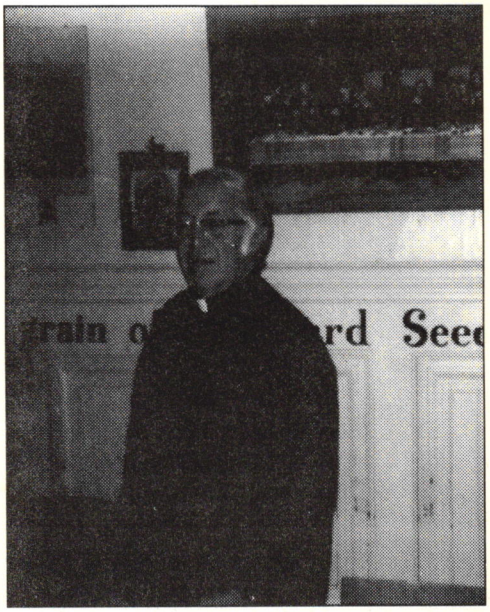
Dan Osterman was our "Methodist Worker." An artist from Whitman country, New Jersey, he brought great faith, a poet's sensibility and a hippish lilt to the work. He was cued for the depths and for the sensitive soul, our surface preoccupations must have been burdensome. He was kind to us and even once called himself a "Quatholic."

Big Bill Elliot landed a spot on the second floor, a brilliant mind with changes to find. He did find the changes. The master pianist and chef emerged and soulful music and discourse were once again heard in our land. For his discoveries, a grateful song was composed to God.

By the late seventies, many more came. There were half a dozen or more heading for monasteries such as Renee, Oton, Peter, Joe and Matthew. Anne Marie, John, Siddharta, Angelica, Bonnie and many others were among this number. Tom Lewis of The Catonsville Nine, joined us, buying a house across the street, now called "Emma House."

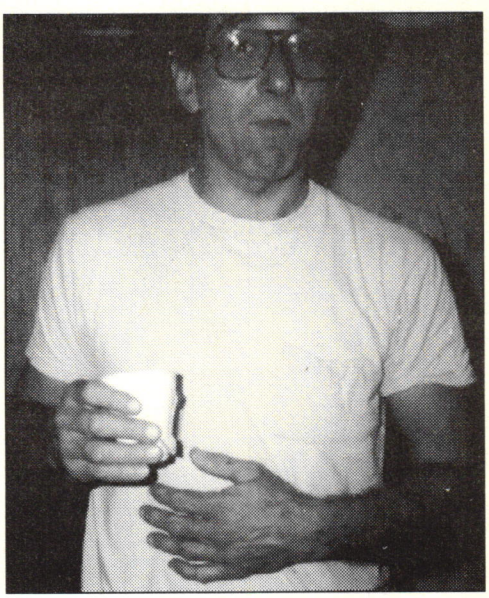
The community grew to about twenty-five by the turn of the decade. There was growth but sadness and tiredness and competing visions began to be felt anew. Sometimes a prophet comes and sees things from a higher perch. His words and actions call for the death of accepted ways and a view to a new day. Such a one came and I left pretty sore, but, as grace would have it, in time, reconciled. A closer "nits and grits" crew went on but not

The dining room.



Rev. Joe Labran, S.J.

The ol' farm crew at the Seed.



Richard "Koz" Kozlowski

without controversy. A sensitive religious sister, Theresa, who had been with the house on and off for some time, had served with this crew enthusiastically at first but became disaffected for some legitimate reasons.

In the spring of 1984, the house burned down. Joe was injured jumping from a third floor window. Joe recovered. Everyone else was safe. Lucky and company led the community through the wilderness, serving meals in a tent, then at St. Paul's Cathedral, until the new house was built a year later. Shortly thereafter, Lucky began getting sick. Bishop Harrington got right behind the effort to rebuild and our friend, Dan Connolly, built a dream house, replete with a state-of-the-art soup kitchen, chapel and small quarters. Thank you, Bishop Harrington and others who believed!

Through all of this, Father Bernard fed us on the Bread of Life, the Word and his inspired commentaries on the Scriptures and Catholic Worker life. Many brother priests, particularly Joe Labran and Father James Connolly, had a share in the salvific mystery particular to the house. Cy Lebeau, Mike Foley, Frankie Scollen and many, many other diocesan priests lent holy hands. Thank you, Bernie and brother priests. You have generously fed us as Christ's lambs and Christ's sheep.

Donna Domiziano picked up the torch following Lucky's tenure as director. The Seed entered another era and period of growth with a carrying on of the work done previously but with different emphases.

There was a strange dynamic set in motion at The Seed during this period which involved heavier drug trafficking in the neighborhood and the appearance of larger numbers of children for supper. It was not ironic that some of the kids had parents largely unavailable to them because of addictions to the very drugs being trafficked. Interestingly, the children's presence tended to soften the harsh climate created by the potent drugs. The problem was very serious and Donna had to contend with some very tough characters.

'Thank you, Bishop Harrington and others who believed!'

A hard, consistent approach on Donna's part, coupled with lots of prayer over several years, yielded some new levels of trust in the community and the drug problem subsisded. Donna's tears convinced some dealers to take their wares elsewhere. In addition, a regular Saturday evening AA meeting took stronger root in the cellar of The Mustard Seed.

A young neighborhood woman, Cheryl, who had been coming to the house for awhile, Joe Devoe and Donna began supporting each other in the daily work of the Mustard Seed more seriously. They became the core of The Mustard Seed's working community. For Cheryl, the Seed was a second family. For Joe and Donna, the Seed was their home. The three deeply bonded and became inseparable to their devotion to the Seed's daily routine.

The Merrick Street Hospitality House, functioning since it's purchase by The Mustard Seed community in 1978 as a refuge for tired workers and guests, had grown pretty weary. With the help of "Worcester Shines," a community volunteer organization with a penchant for very hard and very fast work, new life was breathed into it structurally and socially. "Worcester Shines" also built an outdoor dining patio for The Mustard Seed and landscaped the Seed yard. Surely, a great blessing had been bestowed upon the apostolate by many friends and God's Providence was pondered anew.

Donna's background as a teacher served to intensify the focus of the Seed on children. Initially, Donna began summer camps at The Seed with the help of Passionist volunteers and, during the school year, an after school program. The

'The parable of the mustard seed is about many attributes – faith and its power, the nature of Heaven's reign and growth in the life of God. It is, too, about insignificant beginnings and great ends.'

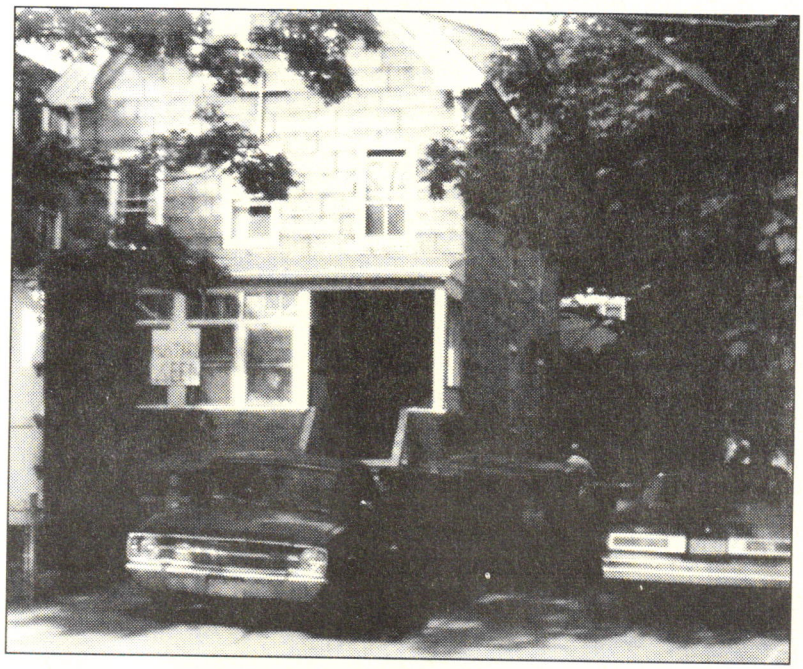
Front row from left to right are: Michael Boover, (Christie the dog), Margie Farren, Ray Demers and Peter Hebb. Back row from left to right are: Peggy Curry, Charlie Anthes-Washburn with son Matthew, John Stevens, Leo-Paul Leblanc and John Cain.

after school program continues today with the help of area college and high school students.

A food pantry took root in the Seed basement, specifically geared to meeting the growing needs of neighborhood families. The "Telephone Pioneers", a group of concerned phone employees, along with the local builder's association, financed and set up a health clinic in the basement.

The Mustard Seed dining room more and more took on a family and community feeling as people of all ages joined together in a more unified experience of breaking bread. Much loneliness was met by a new spirit of family and friendship.

Donna expresses an awe at the miracles she witnesses each day at the Seed, She notes, as Dorothy Day did, that God always sends what is needed. One sampling of a routine miracle was reported when she relayed a story about one busy holiday week when there were two house meals back to back. Provision enough had arrived for everything but the second day's dessert. Busily preparing food boxes for families, the preoccupied crew nonetheless thought to stop and implore God to provide dessert. Within a half hour, Joe Devoe came downstairs and said "You're not going to believe this! Eight cases of cookies just came in from an anonymous donor!" The crew immediately turned to thankfulness, recognizing the Donor they knew so readily replied to their need.



The Mustard Seed.

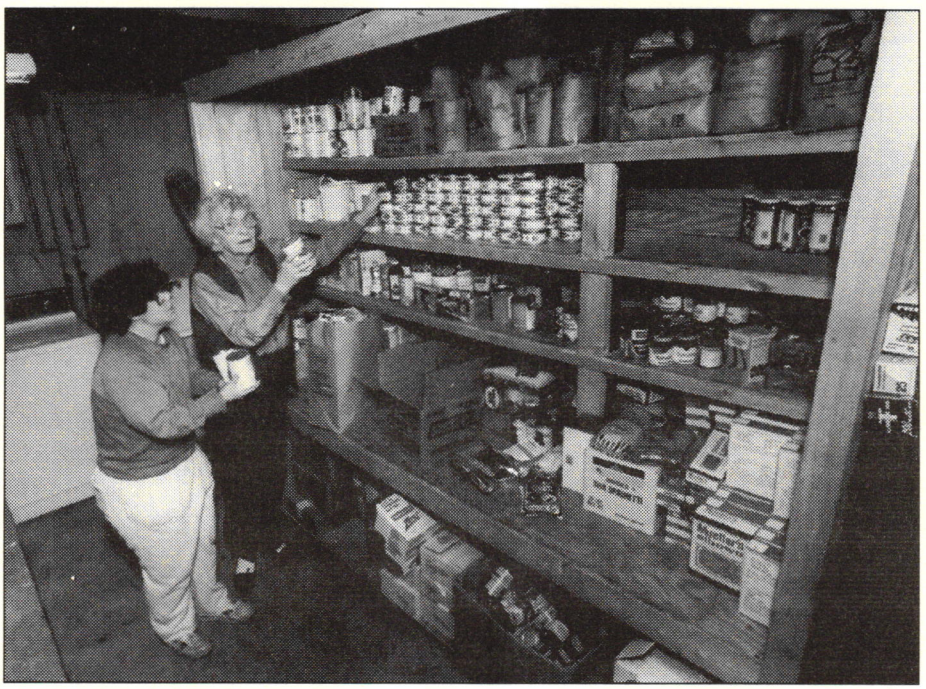
The parable of the mustard seed is about many attributes – faith and its power, the nature of Heaven's reign and growth in the life of God. It is, too, about insignificant beginnings and great ends. As such, we have reason to believe that the best is yet to come. Great things are to be expected from the Mustard Seed. They will not likely be great things as the world sees them but will more reflect, I suppose, this little history, a story of weak vessels and a compassionate, giving God. All that is real to date has been the fruit of that unwarranted and unearned grace that, like in the hymn "brought us safe thus far." We are, in many ways, always beginning but we can be assured that with the grace to receive grace, we will be led "home." God will give rest. He cares for His poor.

Praise be to God and thanks to His people.

Organization	Year	Menu	Money/Food Obtained By
St. Theresa's Parish Harvard	1975	Diversified	Holy Day collections and donations
St. Mary's Parish Shrewsbury	1977	Either ham or turkey, broccoli quiche, cooked vegtables, baked potatotes, rolls, dessert, fruit and coffee	Solicitations by parish team
Christ the King Parish Worcester	1978	Ham, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, tossed salad, bread, coffee and desserts	Donations
St. Francis Episcopal Church, Holden	1979	Hot dogs, beans, potatoe salad, cole slaw and desserts	Annual Church fair proceeds
Shrewsbury Teacher's Association	1979	American Chop Suey, cheese, bread, coffee and Twinkies	School staff member donations
First Baptist Church	1980	Diversified	Donations
St. Anne's Parish Shrewsbury	1980-1981	Ham, salad, potatoes and homemade desserts	Parish thrift shop donations
Sacred Heart Parish Hopedale	1980-1981	Smorgasbord of casseroles, breads and desserts	Parishioner donations
St. Mary's Parish Jefferson	1980-1981	American Chop Suey, corn, bread and desserts	Donations and unsolicited gifts
St. John's Parish Hopkinton	1981	Diversified	Mustard Seed Boxes
Aldersgate United Methodist, Worcester	1982	American Chop Suey, chicken, meatloaf, ham, scrambled hamburger and potatoes, tuna and noodles and ground turkey and gravy over noodles	Direct congregation appeal
First Congregational Church, Shrewsbury	1982	Meatloaf with sauce, green bean casserole, mashed potatoes, applesauce, desserts and milk	Mission outreach committee
St. John's Parish Hopkinton	1981	Diversified	Parishioner donations
Our Lady Good Counsel West Boylston	1981	Diversified	Yearly dance proceeds
United Methodist Westboro	1981	Hot dogs, beans, salad, juice, milk, coffee and dessert	Mission outreach committee

Organization	Year	Menu	Money/Food Obtained By
Wesley United Methodist Worcester	1983	Diversified	United Methodist Women's Group funds
Our Lady of Loreto Parish Worcester	1984	Spaghetti and meatballs, green beans, bread, butter and desserts	Parish funds
Our Lady of the Angels Parish, Worcester	1985	Hot dogs, coleslaw, potatoe salad, baked beans, sandwhich bread, milk, coffee and dessert	Proceeds of parish collections
First Congregational Church, Holden	1986	Beef stew, Italian bread, ginger gread with whipped cream or tunafish grinders and applesauce	Mission outreach committee and church member donations
University of Mass. Medical, Worcester	1986	Turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans and desserts	Grant monies
St. Joseph's Parish Auburn	1987	Diversified and catered by "Blanchard's"	Parish thrift shop proceeds
St. Richard's Parish Sterling	1987	Diversified and catered by "Blanchard's"	Parishioner donations
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/St. Anne Worcester	1988	Diversified	Proceeds from parish bake sale and parishioner donations
Tri-Parish Community Church, Gilbertville, Hardwick and New Braintree	1989	"Super" chili, rice mixed with hamburger and macaroni	Church member and community donations
Worcester State College	1990	Diversified	Newman Club funds
Junior League of Worcester	1990-1991	Appetizers, meatloaf, salads and rolls	Solicitations from Worcester County Bar Association Newsletter
"Friends" Committee of Worcester County Bar Association and Worcester County Bar Association Committee on Needs of the Poor	1990-1991	Appetizers, meatloaf, salads and rolls	Solicitations from Worcester County Bar Association Newsletter
Holy Angels Parish Upton	1990-1991	Shepherd's and chicken pies or turkey sandwhiches and pasta salads with desserts	Collections and parishioner donations
Our Lady of Lourdes	1990-1991	Diversified	Platter program

Organization	Year	Menu	Money/Food Obtained By
Greendale People's Church	1993	Diversified	Outreach budget
All-Saints Episcopal Worcester	1993	Tuna casserole or tuna salad, pickles and desserts	Church funds
St. James Parish, Grafton	1994	Diversified and catered by "Buggy Whip"	Parish fundraising and St. Vincet de Paul society
Knights of Columbus Shrewsbury	1995	Diversified	Raffles and dinner dance proceeds
Our Lady of the Assumption / St. Brigid's Parishes, Millbury	1996	American Chop Suey , hot dogs and beans or bologna sandwhiches with macaroni salad, breads and desserts	Mustard Seed Boxes
Christ Episcopal Church Rochdale	1996	Pasta, tossed salad and desserts	Donations
Barre United Church of Christ, Barre	1996	Lasagna, tossed salad, bread and desserts	Donations



Mustard Seed family members in the Seed's food pantry.

I became involved with the Mustard Seed because...

St. Theresa's Parish, Harvard
"We felt blessed in our lives and wanted to 'give' to others."

St. Mary's Parish, Shrewsbury
"We wanted to reach out."

Christ The King Parish, Worcester
"A young man working on his Eagle Scout Award began our group."

Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Worcester
"Our outreach committee was looking for a mission project the committee could do which was close to home and could be hands on."

Greendale People's Church, Worcester
"We became involved when we read some of the stories about the Mustard Seed in the newspaper."

St. Luke's Parish, Westboro
"We became involved because it was a way to help others."

University of Massachusetts Medical Center, Worcester
"Medical students wanted to become more involved with the community."

I became involved with the Mustard Seed because...

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Worcester
"Love of faith prompted us to become involved."

Christ Episcopal Church, Rochdale
"To more faithfully carry out our mission as a Christian community."

Our Lady of the Assumption and St. Brigid's Parishes, Millbury
"We became involved to live out the Gospel in our lives by ministering to the needs of others while building community in our parishes."

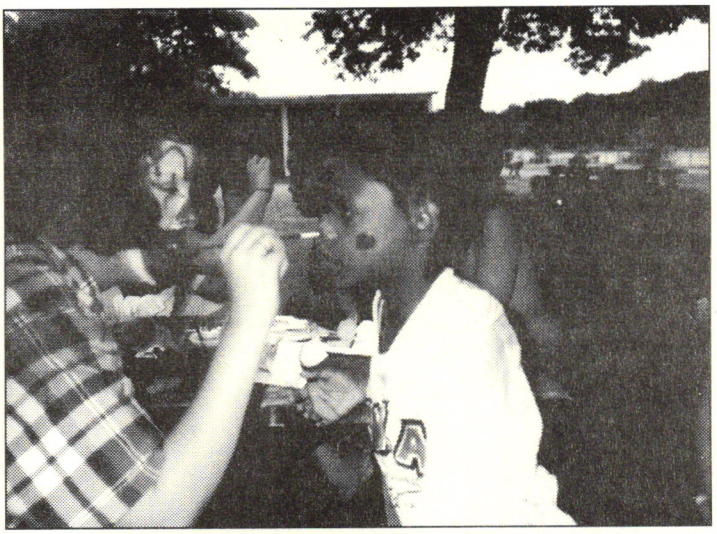
St. Ann's Parish, Shrewsbury
"We admired the work of Father Bernie at The Mustard Seed and were moved to get involved."

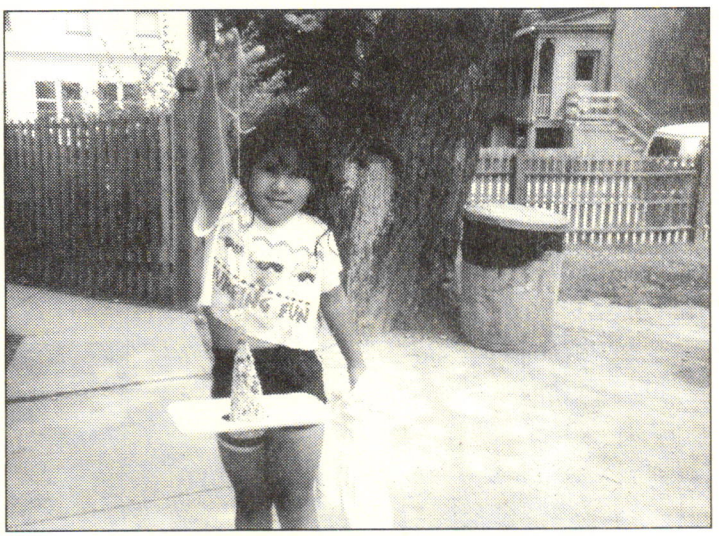
St. Joseph's Parish, Auburn
"We began as a result of a C.Y.C. activity."

St. Richard's Parish, Sterling
"We heard about the worthiness of The Mustard Seed and decided to serve there."

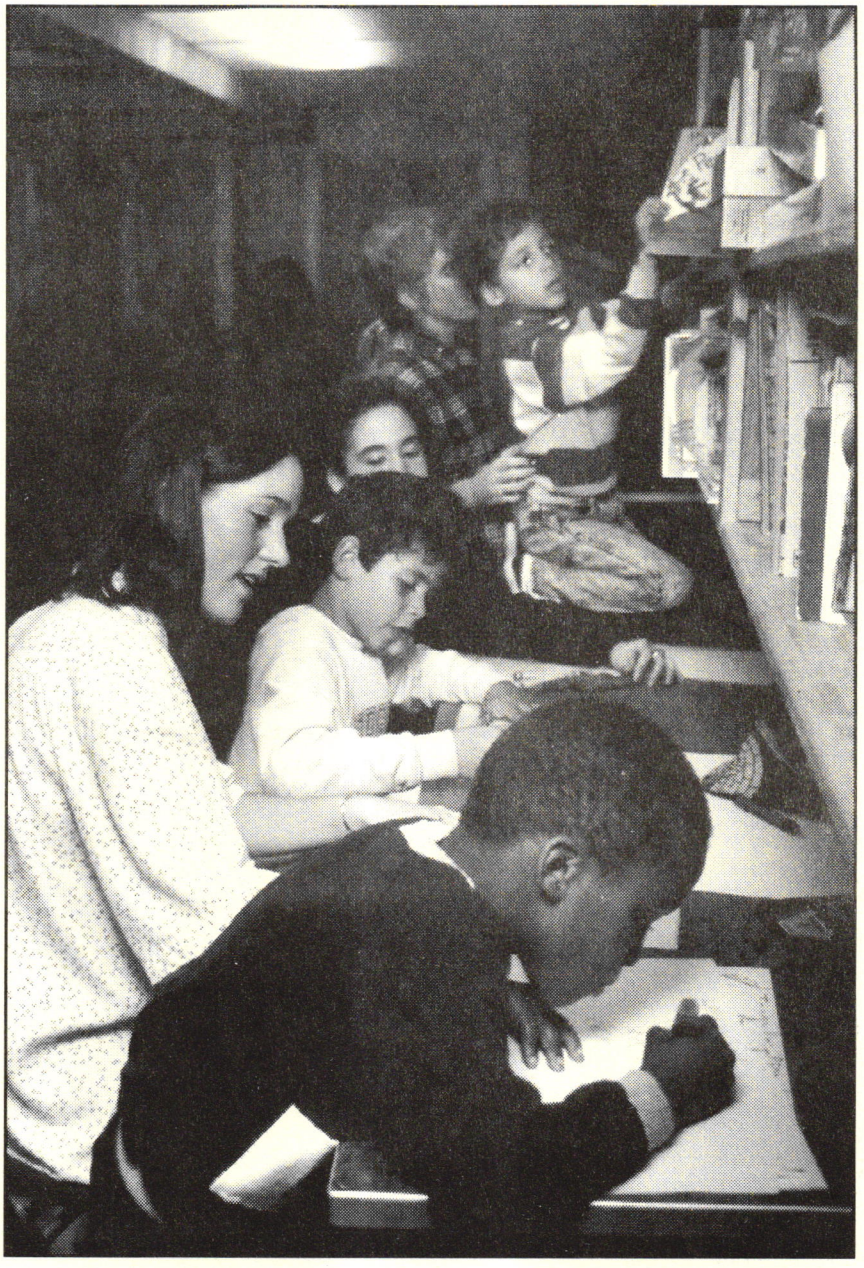
Holy Angels Parish, Upton
"We became involved through the RENEW program. Mustard Seed service was a natural outgrowth of RENEW sessions."

Summer activities at the Mustard Seed





Shrewsbury's first graders from the Paton School sing at lunch at the Mustard Seed.



College volunteers work in Mustard Seed after school program.

Thank you... to all our friends who past and present have been so good to us

Quakers
Holy Rosary/Combined Parish, Spencer
Notre Dame Academy, Worcester
Third Order of St. Francis
The Little Franciscan Sisters of Mary
Sr. Maryanne Laughlin S.S.N.D.
St. Joseph's of Manchester, New Hampshire
Trinity Episcopal Church, Shrewsbury
St. Rose of Lima Parish, Northborough
St. Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral
Mr. Mrs. Raymond Lamothe
Concordia Lutheran Church
Faith House
St. Bernard's Parish, Worcester
Telephone Pioneers
Mr. Robert McCauly
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Northborough
Temple Sinai, Worcester
St. Mary's Parish, North Grafton
St. Mary's Parish Breakfast Group, Spencer
Holy Cross Breakfast Group
Mr. Mel Pelitz and the Worcester Business Association
Mr. Richard Kozlowski
Health-Pro
Shrewsbury Children's Center, Shrewsbury
Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Worcester
The Worcester County Food Bank, Shrewsbury
Paxton Women's Group
Mr. Mrs. Thomas Olivera
The Colony Inn, Worcester
Knights of Columbus, Westboro
Paxton Boy Scouts
Dot's Sandwich Shop, Worcester
Worcester Electrician's Union
Worcester Plumber's Union
Worcester Carpenter's Union
The Worcester Insurance Company
Mr. Michael Fleming
Ms. Janet Hedland
Ms. Joan Friedburg
The Masterman's Company
Jamesbury, Inc.
A.J. Letourneau
Putnam's Cards and Gifts
SPAGS
Hanover Insurance, Worcester
Mr. James Metcalf
Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine, Grafton
The Eckanar School
Dr. Clearmont
St. Ann's Human Services
Mr. Kevin Connoly
Ms. Rosemary Flynn's Group
The Worcester Shines Group
Elm Park Ecumenical Group, Worcester
The Sisters of the Presentation
St. Nicholas Romanian Orthodox Church, Worcester
St. Joseph's House, Manchester, N.H.
Greendale Men's Retirement Group
Mr. Charlie Washburn and "Summersworld"
The True, Dick and O'Brien Families
Notre Dame Academy
St. Ann's Parish Family
Sister Charlene, Saint Ann's Parish, Shrewsbury
Mr. Mrs. Brayton Shanley
Our Lady of Mount Carmel-Saint Ann's Novena Group
St. George's Parish, Worcester
St. Pius X and St. Joseph's Parishes, Worcester
Leicester Prayer Group
Heifer Project
First Congregational Church, Rutland
Rachel's Table, Worcester
Blessed Beggars
St. Joseph's Abbey, Spencer
St. Patrick's Parish, Whitinsville
St. Denis Parish, East Douglas
Barre United Church of Christ
Beth-Israel Temple
Temple Emmanuel, Worcester
Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, West Brookfield
Trinity Episcopal Church, Whitinsville
The College of the Holy Cross, Worcester
Clark University, Worcester
Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester
Assumption College, Worcester
Worcester State College, Worcester
Anna Maria College, Paxton
Becker College, Worcester
Leicester Junior College, Leicester
St. Peter-Marian High School, Worcester
Holy Name High School, Worcester
Uxbridge High School, Uxbridge
Algonquin High School, Northborough
Bancroft School, Worcester
Fales School, Westboro
St Luke's Youth Group, Westboro
Probation Clean-Up Crew, Worcester
Baptist Youth
Pilgrim Church on the Common, Southboro
Methodist Teens
Rena Cavileri and Family
Wachusett Regional High School, Holden
Worcester Academy, Worcester
Shrewsbury High School, Shrewsbury
St. Mary's Elementary School, Shrewsbury
St. Stephen's Elementary School, Worcester

To anyone we may have forgotten, thank you! God doesn't forget and holds you in His heart forever!

Merna Lorena Luna Perez

The Mustard Seed's adopted child.

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